IRS AKTUELL

Newsletter for Research on Society and Space

Places of Arrival – Large Housing Estates in East Germany

_Social Trends: Exodus, Segregation, Immigration

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Content

Dear readers of IRS aktuell,

For three months now, we have been receiving daily news about the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. They confront us with a reality that we no longer thought possible, perhaps even repressed: War in the middle of Europe. The scientific community has unanimously condemned the attack, drawn consequences for research cooperation and shown solidarity with the people in Ukraine. In this situation, thanks to a matching fund from the Leibniz Association and the support of the Ministry of Science, Research and Culture of the State of Brandenburg, the IRS was able to set up a scholarship for a Ukrainian guest researcher who had fled the dangers of war. I would like to thank our International Affairs Officer, Sarah Brechmann, and many other helpers at the IRS for their great commitment at this point.

Our research was not left untouched by the events either. When the transfer workshop of our joint project "From Shrinkage to Immigration. New Perspectives for Peripheral Large Housing Estates? New Perspectives for Peripheral Large Housing Estates" was held, half of the invited practitioners could not show up because they were too busy organising housing for refugees from Ukraine. As in 2015, when hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria had to be accommodated, large housing estates are once again coming into focus as places where affordable housing can still be distributed in the face of tight urban housing markets.

In this issue of IRS aktuell, which was supervised by Matthias Bernt, we devote special attention to the industrially built large housing estates of East German cities and their remarkable change of role: from attractive, modern residential areas to media-stigmatised places of departure and from there to new arrival points of migration. In the aforementioned joint project (p. 17), the IRS, together with partner institutions in the region, researched the background and practical challenges of this change. Contributions in this issue provide information about the change in municipal integration work (p. 14), the role of the housing industry (p. 20) and demands on open space planning (p. 24). Two articles in this issue were contributed by researchers from other Leibniz Institutes (pp. 4, 24).

On 1 January 2022, the IRS reorganised itself (p. 34). Instead of five departments, the Institute now has three main research areas, each with a clearly recognisable focus: "Economy and Civil Society", "Politics and Planning" and "Contemporary History and Archives". Our new research programme (2022-2025) "Disruption – Critical Moments of Socio-Spatial Change" provides a common framework for the work of the research foci. Under this thematic arc, we are increasingly focusing on the disruptions, the extreme, unexpected events that have profound effects on spatial developments, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The war in Ukraine has sadly confirmed the topicality of this theme.

Now I wish you a stimulating read.

Your Oliver Ibert
Director of the IRS

Growing inequality
On the Social Situation in
(East German) Large Housing Estates

Large housing estates exist in both East and West Germany. However, their starting points, their lines of development and the social composition of their inhabitants differ significantly in both parts of the country. Whereas large housing estates in West Germany were from the beginning focal points of immigration and inhabited by predominantly low-income households, the "Plattenbau areas" in East Germany underwent a dramatic transformation: From popular and socially largely homogeneous residential neighbourhoods to places of out-migration and finally to centres of renewed immigration. In this process of change, the socio-spatial inequality in East German cities overtook that in West German cities.

Since the 1960s at the latest, both in West and East Germany, large housing estates were built in industrial multi-storey construction technique to create space for the rapidly growing population in the post-war period. While large housing estates in West Germany, such as Cologne-Chorweiler, were seen as a less attractive form of housing and were often home to an above-average number of "guest workers" – as immigrated workers used to be called – and their families, the large housing estates built in prefabricated slab construction in the East, such as Cottbus-Sandow, were popular and were inhabited by all social classes. On the one hand, there were urban planning reasons for this, because the old towns in the east were hardly modernised and suburban housing estates were not built. On the other hand, socio-spatial inequalities could hardly arise because the GDR as a whole hardly allowed for economic inequalities.

Worsening Inequality in Eastern German Cities

Today, the situation is different. As my colleague Stefanie Jähnen from the Social Science Research Center Berlin and I showed in 2018 in our study "Wie brüchig ist die soziale Architektur unserer Städte?" ("How Fragile is

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His research focuses on social inequalities in the school system and their underlying structures. In this context, he analyses the changing social structure of German cities.

the Social Architecture of Our Cities?"), the (large) cities in eastern Germany have particularly deep socio-economic trenches, which have also deepened particularly strongly in recent years. The extent and dynamics of social inequality in the East even proved to be greater than in West German cities – a finding that caused quite a stir. While the few existing studies still described the social distribution of the population in the eastern German cities as socially homogeneous in the mid-1990s, the eastern German cities we studied already showed a higher spatial unequal distribution of poverty (segregation) in 2005, measured by the proportion of households receiving SGB II (unemployment benefit II), than the western German cities. Moreover, the residential neighbourhoods of the eastern German cities are becoming increasingly unequal over time, whereas this is hardly to be observed in western German cities. Poverty is increasingly concentrated in large housing estates. Poverty rates in the large housing estates themselves have not risen over the last 15 years. It is rather the case that they have remained constant (high) despite the very good economic development, while they have fallen sharply in the other city districts. Most recently, poverty rates of 50 % among children in

large housing estates in eastern Germany were not exceptional.

Some differentiation is in order, however, because the findings are not homogeneous. The study "Berliner Großsiedlungen am Scheideweg?" ("Berlin Large Housing Estates at the Crossroads") by the Kompetenzzentrum Großwohnsiedlungen e. V. from 2021 shows that the social situation in West Berlin's large housing estates is even more strained than in East Berlin. Child poverty (the proportion of children in families receiving transfer payments) is 50 % in the large housing estates in West Berlin, 37.5 % in the large housing estates in East Berlin and 22.6 % outside the large housing estates. What East and West Germany have in common is that it is precisely the housing estates that are particularly hard hit by poverty that are decisive for the extent of social inequality overall. A decisive difference between East and West, however, is that the large housing estates in East Germany are home to a significantly higher proportion of the total population. Systematic differences between large housing estates and other neighbourhoods therefore have a greater impact on city-wide measures of inequality in the eastern German cities.

Moving West, Suburbanisation and Inner-City Redevelopment

How did the development described above come about? As a result of the Peaceful Revolution, from 1989 onwards three overlapping migration trends from the large East German housing estates took place. First, a strong exodus to West Germany began due to rising unemployment. This mainly affected large housing estates near industrial combines (e.g. Halle-Neustadt or Hoyerswerda). The second wave of the exodus began in the mid-1990s as a process of catch-up suburbanisation, "in the course of which
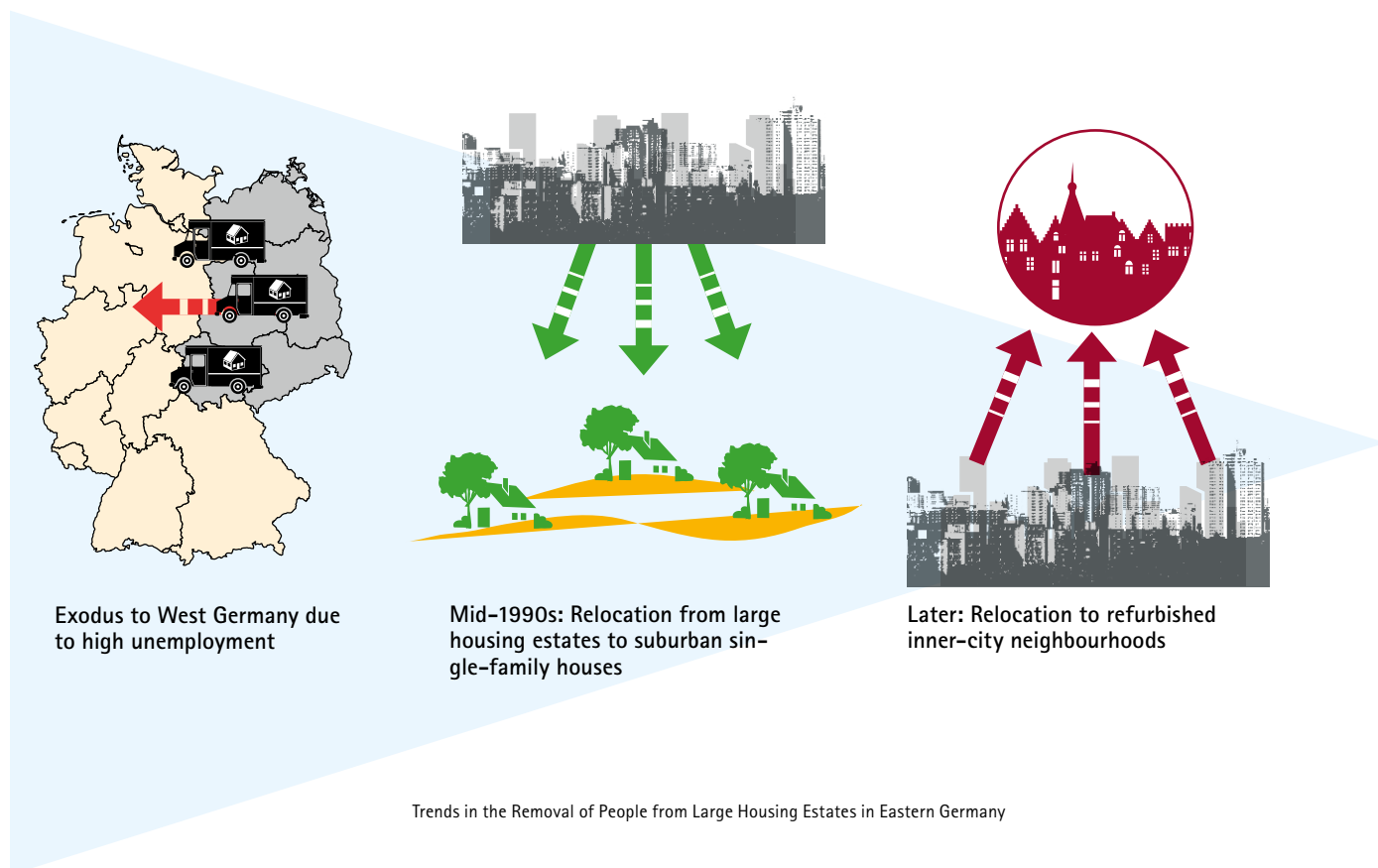

For further reading

Helbig, Marcel; Jähnen, Stefanie (2018): Wie brüchig ist die soziale Architektur unserer Städte? Trends und Analysen der Segregation in 74 deutschen Städten. WZB-Discussion Paper P 2018-001. Berlin. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung
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Hunger, Bernd; Protz, Ralf; Weidemüller, Dagmar; Melnikova, Mariia; Lopitz, Sebastian (2021): Berliner Großsiedlungen am Scheideweg? Kompetenzzentrum Großsiedlungen e.V. Berlin.
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the flywheel of social segregation gains its actual momentum", as urban and regional sociologist Carsten Keller writes. The process of suburbanisation set in so late because it was only after a few years that significant assets had been accumulated in East Germany that made it possible to buy a home on the outskirts of the city. In addition, the key interest rate of the German Bundesbank was around 8 % until the beginning of 1993, which made borrowing unattractive, and then decreased to 2.5 % by the beginning of 1996. The group that moved to the outskirts of the East German cities during this period were mainly financially strong family households from the prefabricated housing areas. Those households that could not afford another form of housing were left behind. Increasing vacancies and loss of purchasing power made services, trade and infrastructure in the large housing estates uneconomical and they disappeared. As a result, the social segregation in the prefabricated buildings became a trigger for further exodus. It was further exacerbated by the influx of people receiving transfer payments into the large housing estates in East Germany.

Parallel to the construction of single-family housing estates in East German suburbs and villages, the old quarters in the inner cities were increasingly refurbished. The comprehensive redevelopment began somewhat later and was less dynamic than suburbanisation. Nevertheless, migration to redeveloped inner city locations is another factor that can explain the high degree of social segregation in some eastern German cities. Precisely because many East German cities were less destroyed in the war than in the West (with the exception of Dresden and Magdeburg), and the old towns were not affected by architectural fashions and experiments, the historic building fabric has been preserved. Today, the redeveloped city centres are sought-after

Exodus to West Germany due to high unemployment

Mid-1990s: Relocation from large housing estates to suburban single-family houses

Later: Relocation to refurbished inner-city neighbourhoods

Trends in the Removal of People from Large Housing Estates in Eastern Germany

locations. The large housing estates, on the other hand, which are often located on the outskirts of the city (e.g. Erfurt-Nord, Schwerin-Großer Dreesch, Leipzig-Grünau, Halle-Neustadt), shrank and became increasingly segregated.

Within the large housing estates, the social situation differs once again depending on the year of construction: the large housing estates built before 1977 are less affected by poverty, but more affected by ageing (proportion of over 65-year-olds) than the large housing estates built after 1977. The reason for this is not to be found in the structural quality of the building stock, but rather in the phase of life of its residents at the time of the Revolution of 1989: Those who had moved into a flat before 1977 typically had school-age children in the early 1990s, which made a move to the West seem impractical, and (almost) adult children in the late 1990s, which in turn made moving into a home less attractive. Younger large housing estates

While the social distribution of the population in East German cities was still described as socially homogeneous in the mid-1990s, East German cities already showed a higher spatial inequality of poverty distribution than West German cities in 2005.

were typically occupied by younger families, who were the most active groups in moving away. Thus, newer neighbourhoods (e.g. Rostock-Groß-Klein, Erfurt-Berliner Platz, Halle-Silberhöhe or Schwerin-Mueßer Holz) were particularly hard hit by people moving away and becoming segregated.

The older large housing estates by contrast (e.g. Chemnitz-Yorckgebiet, Magdeburg-Brückfeld, Erfurt-Johannesplatz or Jena-Lobeda-West) have so far remained more socially stable, additionally supported by the fact that old-age poverty seems to be a much smaller problem in the East German large housing estates than in West German large housing estates. The lower rate of old-age poverty in East Germany is due, on the one hand, to the high proportion of women who did not work full-time in West Germany. As a result, the old-age poverty rate of women is higher in the West than in the East. In addition, there is a disproportionate number of migrants living
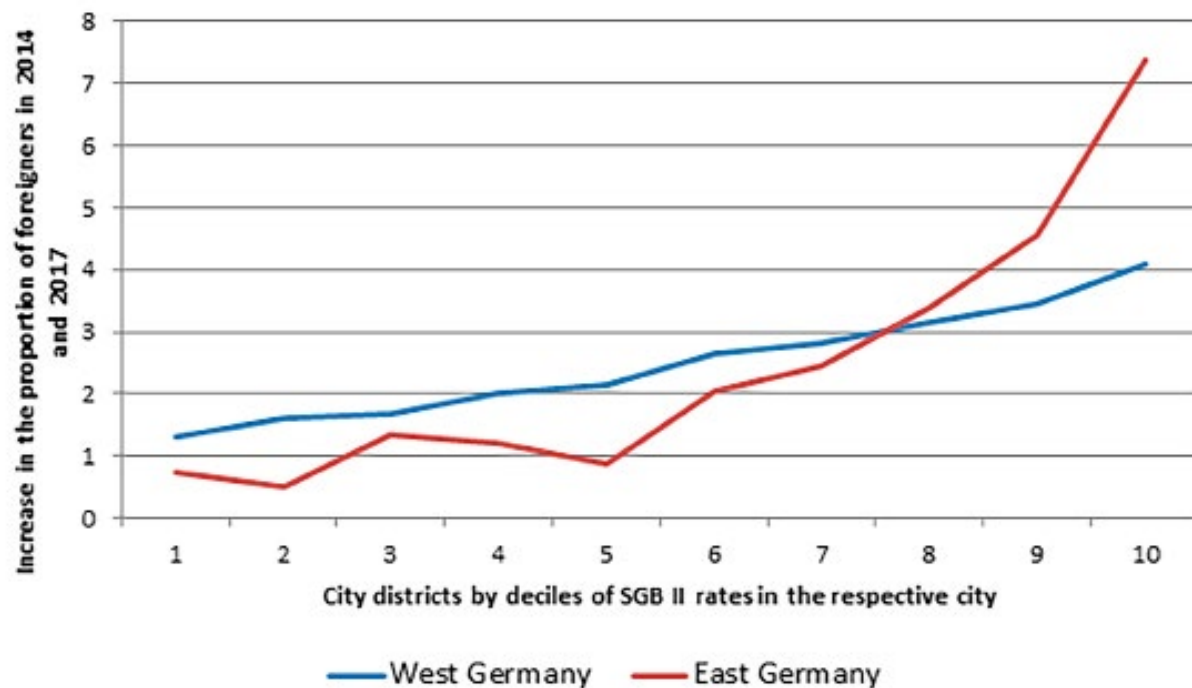
Note: 20 East German and 66 West German cities were included in the calculations. The X-axis shows the city districts according to their SGB II rate. Under 1 are the 10 % of the districts with the lowest poverty rate (measured against the average of their respective city), under 2 those 10 % with the second lowest poverty rate and under 10 the 10 % with the highest poverty rate. Source: Helbig, Marcel, and Stefanie Jähnen, 2019: Where does "integration" take place? The socio-spatial distribution of immigrants in German cities between 2014 and 2017. WZB Discussion Paper P 2019-003. Berlin. Social Science Research Center Berlin

in the large housing estates in western Germany, who were more likely to be affected by unemployment, but more importantly, some of them have not acquired full pension entitlements. In the East German prefabricated housing estates, there were hardly any people with a migration background until 2014. Despite being more socio-economically stable, however, older East German estates will experience a significant change in the coming years due to the death of first-time residents. Starting in 2015, immigration became a major driver in repopulating East German large housing estates.

Large Housing Estates as Arrival Neighbourhoods for Migration

Until a few years ago, the proportion of people with a migration background or without German citizenship was the aspect that differed most between eastern and western German large housing

Nowhere has the proportion of people with a migration background in the resident population increased as much in recent years as in the large housing estates in eastern Germany.

The mosque of the Islamisches Kulturcenter Halle (Saale) e.V. (Islamic Culture Centre) in the northern part of Halle-Neustadt

estates. Before 2014, the proportions of foreigners in the large housing estates of the large eastern German cities were nowhere above 69 % and only in a few cities were the proportions of foreigners in the large housing estates higher than in the rest of the residential areas. This changed between 2014 and 2017, i.e. during a phase of pronounced refugee migration to Germany. As a result, the economically weakest large housing estates in eastern Germany became focal points of immigration.

As can be seen in the figure, the proportions of foreigners in the neighbourhoods of 86 cities studied changed between 2014 and 2017. It can be seen for the western German cities that the proportions of foreigners in the most socially privileged neighbourhoods (1st decile, i.e. the highest-income 10 % of all neighbourhoods, measured against the average of their respective cities) increased the least, by 1.3 percentage points, and in the most socially disad-vantaged neighbourhoods (10th decile) the most, by 4.1 percentage points. This correlation between immigration and social situation can be observed even more strongly in the eastern German cities. While the proportion of foreigners in the socially privileged to middle locations has only risen by about one percentage point, a very strong increase is evident from the 6th decile onwards. In the 9th and 10th deciles, in which the large housing estates are predominantly found, the proportions of foreigners rose by 4.5 and 7.3 percentage points respectively. In this respect, it is precisely the most socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods that have to make the greatest integration effort. A large part of these develop-ments can be attributed to the fact that the newly immigrated, predominantly low-income groups were able to set-tle primarily in areas where vacancy rates were high. In eastern Germany, these were particularly large housing estates on the outskirts, for example southern Halle-Neustadt and Schwe-rin-Mueßer Holz. Where there were fewer vacancies (e.g. in Jena, Rostock or Potsdam), the foreign influx was less socially selective.

Nevertheless, the large housing estates in West and East Germany still differ greatly from each other in terms of their ethnic composition. Looking at the large housing estates in West Ber-lin, for example, the proportion of peo-ple with a migration background was 49.4 % in 2018. The East Berlin large housing estates were far below the Ber-lin average with a share of 24.9 %. But nowhere has the increase in recent years been as strong as in the East Ger-man large housing estates. ∎

Large Housing Estates in Eastern Europe: Quite Normal Residential Areas

Academic research on large housing estates is dominated by a Western perspective. The districts built all over Europe, especially in the 1960s to 1980s, are considered special cases on the housing market and potential social hotspots. The Eastern European reality is different, because here large housing estates are quite normal. At the same time, these neighbourhoods have to deal with completely different problems than their Western European counterparts. The project "Estates after Transition" has taken up the Eastern European perspective and shed light on the planning challenges of Eastern European large housing estates.

Although large housing estates in industrial construction were built in the post-war period both west and east of the Iron Curtain, there are striking differences in terms of their urban planning role and their perception. In Western Europe, they were mainly built in the context of social housing. In socialist countries, they represented the common form of housing construction and were inhabited by a wide range of population strata. While large housing estates in Western Europe housed disproportionately socially disadvantaged groups and quickly found themselves in a stigmatised position, their Eastern European counterparts evaded such a role simply because of their great quantitative importance. For example, large housing estates in Slovakia today account for about 80 % of the total housing stock! This difference is problematic insofar as the discussion in urban and planning research is dominated by the (Northern) Western European perception. As a result, a well-founded discussion of the development potential of Eastern European large housing estates suffers.

Together with partners from the University of Tartu (Estonia) and the European University at St. Petersburg (Russia), a team from the IRS in the project "Estates after Transition – Großwohnsiedlungen nach der Transformation"

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(EAT) took a comparative look at the development conditions of large housing estates in Russia, Estonia and East Germany based on case studies of six residential areas. The researchers asked about the perspectives for action and control and their embedding in larger socio-economic trends. The project's aim was to move away from individual case studies towards a systematic classification and thus to expand the scientific view of large housing estates to include an Eastern European perspective. The transferability of planning and urban policy best practices was also a topic.

As it turned out, an opening of the discourse is urgently needed, both in terms of problem diagnoses and solutions. In post-socialist countries, flats in large housing estates were extensively privatised in the 1990s, mostly individually, to their residents, who belong to (almost) all social classes. This means that two common diagnoses from Western European discourse do not apply: segregation, a major problem from French banlieues to British estates, is not a pressing issue in Eastern European large housing estates. At the same time, there is no over-commitment of public landlords, quite the contrary. Whereas in Western Europe a diversification of ownership structures is often recommended,

Annelinn – Tartu, Estland

Lasnamäe – Tallinn, Estland

in Eastern Europe there is rather the problem of too much fragmentation of ownership. From the financially weak pensioner to the young first-time home buyer to the professional landlord, a wide range of diverging interests are occur on the housing market. This leads to coordination problems. For example, who takes care of the building envelope and the outside areas? The boundaries of private ownership are also often unclear. In Tallinn, buyers could decide where the property should end: directly at the house wall or at a freely chosen distance of up to 20 metres. For each building, the new ownership groups made their own decisions, so that now the responsibilities for outdoor spaces are highly fragmented.

Policy recommendations from Western European discourse often assume a state capable of steering. They presuppose the existence of subsidy programmes, strong public housing companies, financial and human resources in ministries and (planning) adminis-

Against the background of the research results, many best-practice advices from the academic discourse on large housing estates turn out to be unsuitable for Eastern Europe.

trations, competent private planning offices, experience with model processes and a tradition of state housing market intervention in a market economy environment. None of these conditions is fulfilled in post-socialist countries. There is no institutionalised experience and competence, nor are there sufficient financial resources after decades of austerity policies. In contrast, there is experience with negotiated solutions between very heterogeneous actors.

Against this background, many best practice suggestions from the academic discourse on large housing estates prove to be unsuitable for Eastern Europe. However, it also became apparent that the institutional landscapes in Eastern European countries themselves are very diverse and the transfer possibilities of political concepts within Eastern Europe are very limited. International dialogue, not only in academic circles but also among planning practitioners, on the other hand, is perceived as very pro-

Buildings along Korowinskoje Avenue in Moscow, Dmitrowski Quarter in the Northern District

ductive and desirable. This is where knowledge transfer efforts in international planning research can come in.

East Germany, by the way, can be seen as a mixed case between the East and West European models. Here, too, flats were privatised on a large scale, but not to the tenants, but to private companies, so that today in many housing estates up to a third of the flats are in the hands of financial investors. Socially, some, but by no means all, East German housing estates have moved close to hotspots like West German Cologne-Chorweiler in recent years. However, socio-economic downward trends are very clearly visible. In terms of state options for action, East Germany is more in line with the Western European model, with still considerable state intervention capacities and a deeply rooted planning culture. Urban planning and socio-political concepts such as those applied in the case study areas of Berlin-Marzahn and Halle-Neustadt are
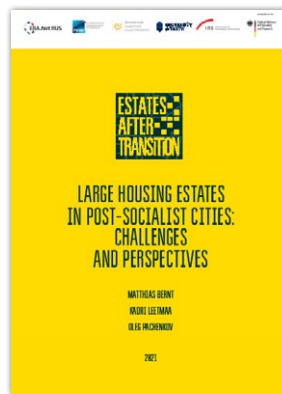
Bernt, Matthias; Leetma, Kadir; Pachenkov, Oleg (2021): Large Housing Estates in Post-Socialist Cities. Challenges and Perspectives (Discussion Paper)

to the
Discussion Paper

▶ www.estatestransition.org
  ▶ www.blog.urbact.eu

not available to Eastern European large housing estates.

The results of the EAT project will be included in a special issue of the Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, which is expected to be published in 2023 and will contain articles on large settlements in the UK, France, Northern Macedonia, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania and Russia. First articles from EAT have already been published online. Housing policy conclusions will be published soon on the blog of the EU-funded urban development platform URBACT. ■

The Reorganisation of Municipal Integration Work Using the Examples of Schwerin, Halle and Cottbus

Since 2015, eastern German cities have increasingly become new destinations for international mi-gra-tion. The majority of immigration took place in the large housing estates, which still had larger vacancies in the housing sector. Here, the proportion of immigrant population rose sharply, which posed major challenges for municipalities and urban civil societies. As part of the "StadtumMig" project, the IRS examined the reorientation of municipal integration work from 2015 onwards. The researchers were able to show that the municipalities were able to quickly establish their own structures and coopera-tion networks, but that their stabilisation remains difficult.

Eastern German cities have established themselves as places of arrival at the latest since the strong influx of refugees from 2015 onwards. The change was particularly noticeable in cities with large housing estates, which had previously been heavily affected by migration and thus vacancies. Such cities often took in more refugees than the Königstein Key – the nationwide distribution key for refugees – would have provided. As a result, in some large housing estates, such as Halle-Neustadt and Schwerin-Mueßer Holz, the proportion of migrant population rose from a very low starting level to up to 30 % in a short time. As a result, these municipalities have to cope with major integration tasks. For the cities, this development had positive and neg-ative effects. On the one hand, they were able to stabilise their population figures, especially in the large housing estates; the new residents contributed to a rejuvenation in the neighbour-hoods and also to a reduction in the housing vacancy rate (see p. 20). On the other hand, the demographic change also increased the deficits in the neigh-bourhoods, including the infrastruc-tural undersupply (see p. 24 and p. 28). The recent influx of refugees from

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Ukraine suggests that 2015 was not an isolated case and that municipalities as a whole must prepare themselves to be able to react quickly to immigration. So what can be learned for the future from the 2015 immigration situation? How do municipalities need to be posi-tioned for this?

Researchers in the joint project "StadtumMig – From Urban Rede-velopment Focus to Immigration Neighbourhood? New Perspectives for Peripheral Large Housing Estates" in three large housing estates in the East German partner cities Schwerin, Halle and Cottbus (see box on p. 17). Researchers from the IRS have spe-cifically investigated the transforma-tion of municipal administrative struc-tures and approaches, especially in the integration and urban planning offices in the three municipalities. In order to grasp the scope of the changes, they compared municipal concepts of action, analysed documents and con-ducted numerous expert interviews with employees of the administrations, the regular services, in the projects of social organisations as well as with volunteers of various initiatives and self-organisations of migrants.

Three central findings can be formulated on the basis of these investigations:

- An alignment of values and orientations in municipal integration work had already taken place to a large extent in the years before 2015, namely towards an understanding of integration as a process of change in society as a whole.
- Regardless of this, however, the three project municipalities have taken very different paths in developing new administrative structures since 2015 and 2016.
- The involvement of volunteers plays a major role in the implementation of integration tasks.

From improvisation to strategic coordination

The reorganisation of municipal integration work after 2015 took place in several phases and varied locally. At the beginning, it became clear that existing structures had reached their limits. In Schwerin and Halle, for example, it became apparent that the existing position of integration officer was no longer sufficient to adequately address the situation. In the first phase, which was about coordinating the initial reception and accommodation of the increasing number of refugees in 2015 and 2016, new key figures established themselves in the administrations. In Schwerin it was the newly appointed head of social affairs, in Cottbus the new coordinator for asylum in the social affairs department. They were able to draw on internal administrative, interdepartmental working groups in the municipalities. After about a year, the experiences with the arrival process led to a second phase in which visible, but in the cities studied very different, reorganisations of the municipal structures in the area of integration took place.

In Schwerin, the existing structures were reorganised by adding two pilot

The reorganisation of municipal integration work after 2015 took place in several phases. At the beginning, it became clear that existing structures had reached their limits.

posts to the office of the integration commissioner and assigning it to the social department. The new head of department pursued a comprehensive conceptual integration of integration work with the municipal compulsory tasks in the social sector, e.g. with youth social work or day care planning. The restructuring made it possible to link some of the integration tasks with the current tasks in these areas and to finance them partly through this.

In Halle, a new structure was established to improve governance – the Service Centre for Integration, which was placed under the Lord Mayor's office. The new centre gave integration work a high visibility and can be read as the city's commitment to taking on the tasks. In addition to the management position, the integration officer and a team that managed the decentralised accommodation of the refugees were located here. The later integration of other municipal commissioners and democracy promotion into the centre not only enabled better cooperation between the commissioners, but also a consolidation of the new structure.

In contrast to Schwerin and Halle, the management in Cottbus was bottom-up. The coordinator for asylum organised conferences with committed people and employees of social organisations and projects in all districts affected by the influx. The focus was on the challenges of working with refugees, the need for support from the administration and networking between the actors. The result of these conferences was a list of demands that formed the basis for negotiations with the Brandenburg state government on the design and financing of migration social work in Cottbus. In addition, external funding was placed with the coordination office, so that a new structure was also created in Cottbus – the department for education and integration with sixteen employees, which was subsequently integrated into the mayor's office and upgraded to a specialised service.

> Municipal administrative structures in the field of integration can be organised in very different ways. However, reliable funding is important.

The very different forms of reorganisation of integration work in the cities depend on various factors, firstly on the key figures established in the process and secondly on their possibilities to secure the new structures financially. This is because integration work is still a voluntary municipal task, and cities have to renegotiate the funding for it with the state governments again and again. This often makes it very difficult for municipalities to establish long-term, new positions or structures to manage integration tasks in their administrations.

Integration work in the neighbourhood – asymmetrical cooperation

In the implementation of integration tasks, the municipalities are also dependent on grants and project tenders from the Länder, the federal gov-

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StadtumMig project: From urban redevelopment focus to immigration neighbourhood

Large housing estates in eastern Germany are changing from places of shrinkage to centres of immigration. While the growing population numbers open up new perspectives for the settlements, they also place new demands on infrastructure and open space planning as well as on the integration and participation approaches of the municipalities towards the new residents. Against the backdrop of an international debate on so-called arrival neighbour-hoods, the question arises as to how the monofunctional (and infrastructurally poorly equipped) large housing estates can fulfil their role as places of arrival and integration centres. In the research network "From urban redevelopment focus to immigrant neighbour-hood? New Perspectives for Peripheral Large Housing Estates", or "StadtumMig" for short, the IRS, together with the Institute for Ecological Spatial Development (IÖR) in Dresden, the Berlin Institute for Empirical Research on Integration and Migration at the Humboldt University of Berlin (BIM) and the Brandenburg Consulting Company for Urban Renewal and Modernisation mbH (B.B.S.M.) in Potsdam, is looking at four large housing estates: Mueßer Holz and Neu-Zippendorf in Schwerin, Sandow in Cottbus and Südliche Neustadt in Halle (Saale). The focus of interest is on the newly created needs for infrastructures, open space planning, social services, ques-

▸ stadtummig.de

tions of coexistence as well as the approaches to action and forms of control that are being developed in the municipalities. StadtumMig is developing basic and orientation knowledge about a current phenomenon of neighbourhood development, creating action guidelines for the selected municipalities and will incorporate its findings into a handbook for application in municipalities with similar challenges. The StadtumMig project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the "Leading Initiative Future City" funding programme. It runs from May 2019 to September 2022 and is coordinated by Matthias Bernt (IRS).

▸ The final conference of the project will take place on 19 September 2022.

ernment and the European Union, resulting in a more temporary and project-based financing of municipal integration work. One way to compensate for this regularly changing funding is to involve volunteers in integration work. Of course, this also brings a great advantage, namely the participation and co-creation of the integration process by the citizens, which also supports the opening and transformation of society as a whole. In the research of the StadtumMig project it became clear that different forms of cooperation with the voluntary sector have been established in the city administrations. Schwerin and Halle, which already had very well established integration work before 2015, have long-standing horizontal structures for cooperation: the integration networks, which are led by the integration officers. The issues of integration work are discussed here in various thematically organised working groups. Cottbus was at the beginning in this regard in 2016, but was
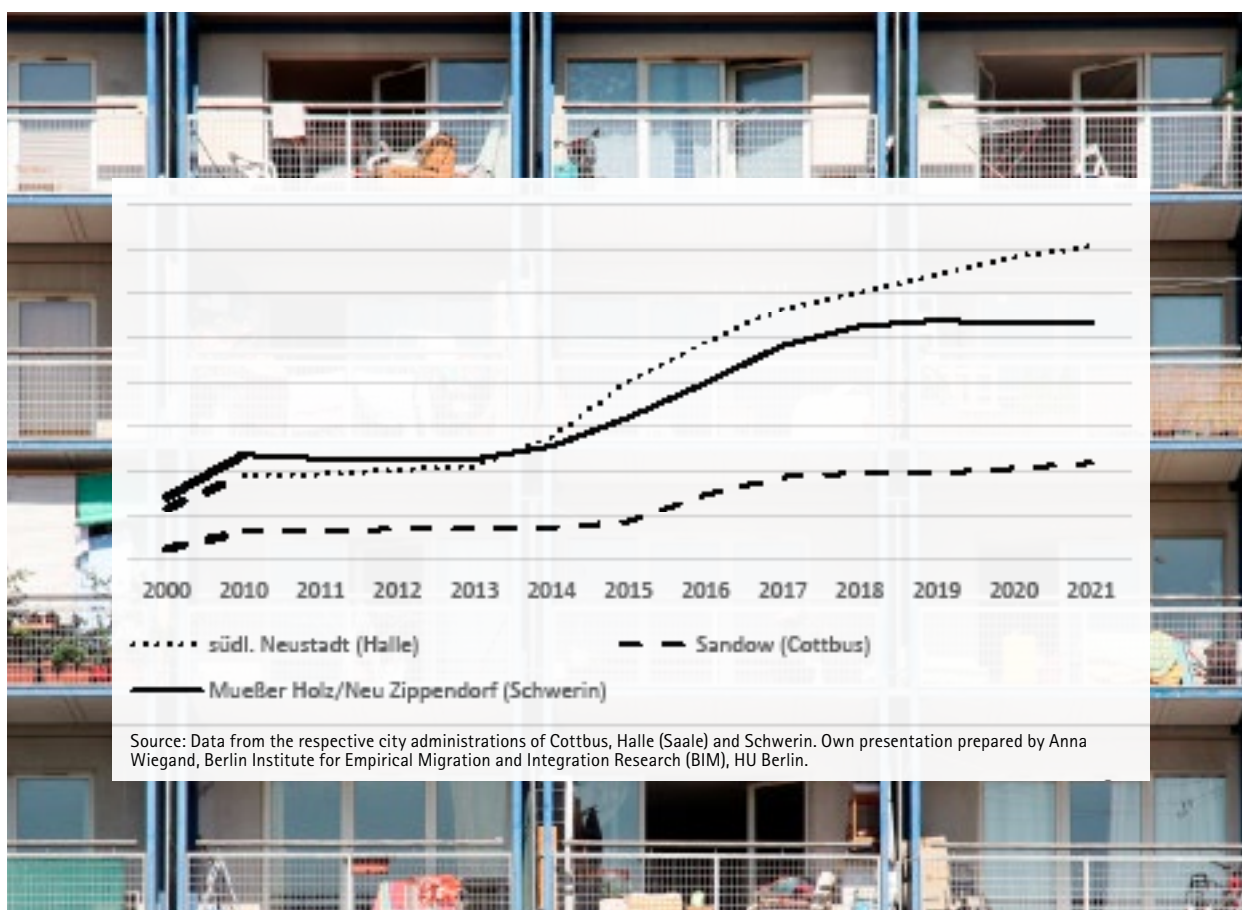
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Jessop, Bob (2020): Putting Civil Society in Its Place. Governance, Metagovernance and Subjectivity. Bristol: Policy Press

Bommes, Michael (2018): Die Rolle der Kommunen in der bundesdeutschen Migrations- und Integrationspolitik. In Frank Gesemann & Roland Roth (Hrsg.): Handbuch Lokale Integrationspolitik, 99-123. Springer/VS.

quickly able to establish a horizontal way of working due to numerous active initiatives, although this has not yet been institutionalised in this form. Cooperation here takes place in district or specialised conferences.

In the example of the three cities, it was observed that both integration networks and event-related cooperation in conferences are suitable forms for jointly addressing the tasks in the immigrant neighbourhoods. However, there were clear differences in the way administrations approach and involve volunteers. In Schwerin, attention is paid to compensating for the perceived deficits of volunteers, such as – from the administration's point of view – a lack of efficiency and parallel activities. In Cottbus, on the other hand, volunteers are involved in the joint preparation of negotiations with the state or city government about finances and new strategies. The Cottbus model is thus based more on the idea of an alli-

Source: Data from the respective city administrations of Cottbus, Halle (Saale) and Schwerin. Own presentation prepared by Anna Wiegand, Berlin Institute for Empirical Migration and Integration Research (BIM), HU Berlin.

Percentage of foreign population in urban districts

ance with the actors in the neighbourhood, whereas cooperation in Schwerin in the past has shown quite dirigiste traits.

The British economist, sociologist and political scientist Bob Jessop, who has studied the challenges of governance in vertical and horizontal networks, points to the difficulties of coordinating different types of actors in horizontal networks. These are characterised by different working methods, motives and resources, which also always characterises an asymmetry of power in the networks. While the main office (in this case administrative staff) focuses on objectives, effectiveness and synergies, the voluntary work is about mutual support and empowerment. The findings of the StadtumMig project suggest that more top-down organised coordination models can be very efficient, but that there is a danger of not respecting the voluntary nature of voluntary work enough and limiting

its decision-making and organisational possibilities. This can break down the asymmetries in horizontal networks, which would impair cooperation.

In summary, the inter-municipal comparison in the StadtumMig project suggests that municipal administrative structures in the field of integration can be organised very differently. However, it is important to have reliable funding in order to prevent an endless loop between the situation-related development and dismantling of structures, positions and projects. Integration work that is designed horizontally, as cooperation with citizens, can promote a sustainable process of opening and transformation in urban society. ∎

Who rents and how?
A Housing Economics View of Large East German Housing Estates

What role do housing ownership relationships play in the development of large housing estates? How do they influence their social structures and development prospects? The IRS investigated these questions in the southern Neustadt in Halle (Saale) and on the Dreesch in Schwerin, among other places. It turned out: East German large housing estates have experienced a reshuffling of the homeowner structure in recent years. Commercial investors have acquired considerable parts of the housing stock and have become a structure-determining factor alongside municipal and cooperative owners. The consequences are very differentiated.

As part of the StadtumMig project (see box p. 17), the respective planning histories of selected large housing estates were reviewed, documents (e.g. planning documents and annual reports) were analysed, and interviews were conducted with administration, the housing industry, urban planning and other actors. The aim was to understand the different perspectives on the transformation of large housing estates. Ownership structures and housing business models formed a separate research module.

In retrospect, the path to today's ownership structure of large housing estates in East Germany can be understood as a sequence of three waves of sales: The first wave can be traced back to the Old Debt Assistance Act (AltSchG) of 1993, which obliged "old debt-burdened" municipal and cooperative housing companies from the GDR to privatise one sixth of their holdings. In the GDR, housing companies had taken on debts with the GDR state bank, which, however, had no factual significance for their housing activities. With the privatisation of the GDR state bank, "virtual" debts became real debts. The governing coalition of CDU and FDP decided to reduce the debts through a state old debt redemption fund as well as a lump-sum partial

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privatisation of the stock. Even then, buying up these flats became a playing field for "knights of fortune and prefabricated housing hasards", as the news magazine "Der Spiegel" wrote in its 11/2000 issue. Almost without exception, these had to file for bankruptcy after a few years. The affected stocks thus fell into the receivership of the lending banks and were sold on several times in the following years, often in "packages" with other investments such as wind turbines or shopping parks.

A second wave of sales began in the 2000s. At that time, East German cities were confronted with population losses that had taken on dramatic exceptions in the large housing estates. One consequence of this situation was a sharp drop in property prices in the affected areas. Interview partners told us that in the 2000s discount purchase prices of 60 euros per square metre for an unrenovated prefabricated building were normal. The properties privatised in the 1990s were shifted back and forth between different owners over a period of about ten years, with speculative business models dominating. In addition, there were further "private treaty" sales by municipal and cooperative companies that needed liquidity in the difficult market situation.

Schwerin – Neu Zippendorf und Mueßer Holz
Eigentumsverhältnisse

Datengrundlage: AfGVK Mecklenburg Vorpommern (ALKIS-Gebäude)
                  Eigentumübersicht ISEK 2016, © OpenStreetMap-Mitwirkende,
                  Recherche und Datenaufbereitung (© Leibniz-Institut für
                  Raumbezogene Sozialforschung)

CRS: ETRS 1989 UTM Zone 32
Verfasser: Luis Schwarzenberger (IÖR Dresden), Felix Böhmer (IRS Erkner) - Mai/2021.

Eigentumsübersicht der Liegenschaften

kommunal

genossenschaftlich

privat

sonstiges (Unbekannt, Privatpersonen, etc.)

Gebäude außerhalb Mueßer Holz
und Neu Zippendorf

0   125   250   500 m
1: 6000 für DIN A2

Norden

Städtebauliche Einordnung
Gesamtstadt

0   2 km
© OpenStreetMap-Mitwirkende

Map with owner types in Schwerin and Halle

Since the 2010s, privatisation of municipal and cooperative housing has been a thing of the past, so that hardly any new stock comes onto the market. This leads to concentration processes in which portfolios are sold on from one financial investor to another, companies merge, or portfolios are combined in specialised sub-companies and sold on. Profits are achieved primarily by exploiting economies of scale (profitability through mass), by insourcing (the handling of janitorial, repair and other services through own subsidiaries that are trimmed to extreme cost savings) and, where possible, rent increases. This development can also be observed paradigmatically in the city districts studied. For example, in the southern Neustadt in Halle (Saale), properties acquired in the 2000s by a relatively small company specialising in insolvency buyouts were taken over in the 2010s by the listed company Grand City Properties, based in Luxembourg, and finally sold on to the Swedish Heimstaden Group in 2021. As a result, the list of owners in both districts now reads like a Who's Who of the financialised (i.e. driven by investors' expectations of returns on the capital market) housing industry in Germany.

With the rise of listed, highly profit-oriented housing companies, three distinctive housing industry models can now be found in large housing estates in eastern Germany. They sometimes differ significantly in how they allocate housing and how they deal with their property portfolios.

Municipal housing companies

In general, municipal companies in Germany are often called upon by their municipalities to assist in the fulfilment of compulsory municipal tasks. This includes the provision of housing for groups of people who cannot provide for themselves on the market, such as recipients of transfer payments and asylum seekers. As a result, municipal

Bernt, Matthias (2021): Die Segregationsmaschine: Entmischung in deutschen Großwohnsiedlungen und ihre Ursachen. Die Wohnungswirtschaft, 74(2), 8–11.

Bernt, Matthias; Colini, Laura; Förste, Daniel (2017): Privatization, Financialization and State Restructuring in Eastern Germany: The Case of Am Südpark. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 41, 555–571.

housing companies usually provide a disproportionate amount of housing for low-income groups and groups discriminated against in the housing market. The fact that the companies' portfolios are spatially concentrated in large housing estates already leads to an increased spatial concentration of socially disadvantaged people in these estates.

Cooperatives

In addition to the municipal enterprises, the housing cooperatives represent a second pillar of housing provision in the large housing estates in East Germany. Due to their specific legal construction, they often have a tendency towards structural conservatism, where the boards of directors do not bring proposals to the general meeting that they expect to be rejected by the majority of the members. This is particularly true for the housing of stigmatised population groups. In addition, applicants for housing in cooperatives have to subscribe to cooperative shares when renting a flat. This is a considerable problem for people on transfer payments, as these costs are rarely covered by the job centres or the foreigners' offices. As a result, the proportion of these groups of people in cooperative housing is far below average.

Private renting

The rental policies of private, often capital market-driven housing companies are extremely heterogeneous. In addition to companies that almost never rent to recipients of transfer payments and people without German citizenship, there are also companies that focus their rental business on precisely these groups. In this case, low purchase prices, high occupancy rates, low management costs and state-guaranteed rent payments are combined into a successful rental model. Unlike municipal and cooperative companies, locally operating property man-

agement companies are closely integrated into global corporate strategies in which the development of individual locations plays only a subordinate role. They often have tight targets in terms of rental income and little scope for investment. As a result, they often focus on ensuring high occupancy rates and are very competitive in the market to do so. There are reports of the "99 euro flat", the distribution of Arabic-language flyers in front of refugee accommodation and a waiver of debt-free and creditworthiness checks. The following quote from an interview with a property management company succinctly reflects this orientation:

"Somewhere in a distant location sits a lettings person who processes the statistics. And to be honest, he doesn't care whether we put up a headscarf or a Hartz IV recipient. The main thing [...] is that the terminations that come in are compensated for by new contracts [...]. "

As a result of this rental practice, households that are discriminated against elsewhere or can only afford the cheapest offers due to their income situation are often still most likely to find accommodation in the flats bought by financial investors. As with the municipal companies, this leads to an increased concentration of poor households in the corresponding stock.

The overall picture is differentiated: On the one hand, there are considerable differences between individual landlords. Above all, the cooperatives are "anchors of stability" in the areas. However, this also goes hand in hand with a weaker commitment to providing low-income groups with housing. This task is largely taken over by the municipal companies and some private landlords. As a rule of thumb one can state: The higher the share of municipal and/or private landlords in a large housing estate, the lower the social status. The losers are primar-

ily the areas where demolitions in the context of urban redevelopment and privatisation of municipal and cooperative housing have been concentrated in the past. Extreme concentrations of poverty have developed here in a very short time. The neighbourhoods studied in the StadtumMig project indeed belong to this group.

The great importance of commercial housing companies for the strong concentration of financially weak and/or migrant households in large housing estates has so far been neglected in discussions about the planning and urban policy control of the social development of large housing estates. The relevant networks are almost exclusively made up of municipal housing companies and cooperatives that work closely with politicians and have been involved in processes of cooperative neighbourhood development for a long time. Commercial housing providers have so far been a "blank spot". They cannot be reached through purely voluntary cooperation, but at the same time they play a key role. The question of how they can be involved in efforts to develop large housing estates in a socially sustainable way must be asked more actively.

For further reading

Grunze, Nico (2017): Ostdeutsche Großwohnsiedlungen: Entwicklung und Perspektiven. Springer/VS.

Are Open Spaces in Large Housing Estates Suitable as Places of Encounter?

Large housing estates were originally planned with their own district centres and lots of green space between the buildings. In the StadtumMig project, the Leibniz Institute for Ecological and Regional Development (IÖR) in Dresden examined the urban structures, open spaces and infrastructures of selected large housing estates in eastern Germany to see whether they still offer places for meeting, exchanging ideas and getting to know each other. It turned out that there is a lack of suitable meeting places. Especially under the impression of renewed population growth due to migration, open space planning in large housing estates is therefore facing great challenges.

In the sub-project of the IÖR within the StadtumMig project, the potentials and obstacles of appropriating public spaces were investigated. For this purpose, two perspectives on the structural-spatial situation of large housing estates were adopted: on the one hand, that of the built space with its structural, physical and functional aspects (e.g. infrastructure, residential buildings or relationships to the landscape), and on the other hand, that of the lived space based on people's everyday experience, their needs and resources. On-site mapping, online walks with local actors, interviews, document and data analysis and survey results were used.

The Initial Situation – A Lot of Green, but Little Going On

East German large housing estates are characterised by a high proportion of green space. The original urban development plans from the 1960s to 1980s already provided for large, wide green spaces. As a rule, the residential buildings are set back from the streets. As a result, there were and still are many intermediate green spaces without any real function or use. However, there were and are also variously planted front garden areas at the entrances to the buildings. In the courtyards between the row buildings there are

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lawns and plantings. They were originally used mainly as laundry drying areas. Occasionally, there are recreational areas with playground equipment. In the peripheral areas, larger city parks with a variety of leisure facilities were often created. In addition, the settlements often border on landscaped areas such as forests or riverbanks. Originally, district centres were also planned in the settlements, which bundled various shopping and service offers and were designed as pedestrian areas with recreational facilities. However, these were only partially implemented, as the resources for this were already lacking in some areas at the time of their creation.

After 1989, funding measures from the federal programme "Städtebauliche Weiterentwicklung großer Neubaugebiete" (Urban Development of Large New Housing Areas) attempted to supplement these urban development elements, some of which were still missing, and also to improve the open space facilities. New playgrounds and more neighbourhood parks were created and the existing ones upgraded, also to counteract the increasingly negative image of the "Platte" (slab). With the diagnosis of high vacancy rates as a result of dramatic population losses in almost all East German cities, and there especially in the large

Missed opportunity: The pedestrian zone "Am Treff" on the north-south link in the Halle/Südliche Neustadt residential area not only has a small-scale structure thanks to various owner-managed shops, but is also well frequented. The new retail complex opposite only turns a windowless back on this lively place. (Photo: K. Friedrich)

Cottbus-Sandow: The pedestrian zone from GDR times was supplemented with flat commercial new buildings. It offers shops on both sides that enliven the pedestrian area. Seating and newly planted trees make it possible to spend time without being forced to consume.

housing estates, the housing industry and consequently also the urban planning perspective on the residential areas changed. The extensive deconstruction, which has been promoted since 2002 within the framework of the federal programme "Stadtumbau Ost" (Urban Redevelopment East), has been implemented primarily in the stock of large housing estates. The strategy of deconstruction from the outside in, originally favoured in most cities, with the aim of maintaining compact and functional urban structures, continuing to operate the network-bound infrastructures efficiently and ultimately re-using the peripheral areas for other, mainly landscape-related land uses, has not been successful in most cities. Although there were corresponding urban planning concepts, in many places, as a result of forced privatisation, the interests of private-sector owners determined the course of events (see p. 20 and p. 30). The control possibilities of integrated urban development concepts or urban redevelopment concepts were therefore basically limited to the remaining municipal and cooperative holdings.

As a result, buildings were demolished almost everywhere, both residential buildings and functional buildings such as kindergartens, which were often located in the inner block areas of the residential rows. This has led to an enormous increase in open spaces, for which there is (initially and probably also in future in most cases) "only" the option of subsequent use as green open space. There was no need for redevelopment, and the funding regulations generally prohibited this for the next ten years anyway. This may sound like a luxury – especially in comparison to densely built-up inner city neighbourhoods. In some places, new, attractive open spaces could be created as a result. For the majority of the areas, however, it was hardly possible to find sensible and, above all, long-term financially viable approaches to the use and design of open space. As a result, there are currently even more wide, green spaces in the housing estates,

In the neighbourhoods, there are few everyday occasions for people to actually meet each other. At the same time, these occasions are rarely linked to places where people can stay and talk.

which in many places convey a sense of emptiness and uneventfulness. The residents, too, perceive such areas less as potentials, but rather intensify the perception of decline and devaluation.

Lack of Meeting Places and Possibilities for Improvement

With the strong immigration of refugees since 2015, the large housing estates are once again experiencing an influx. In addition to pure population growth, this is also changing the demographic composition of the residents: households are becoming younger, more international and larger. The neighbourhoods must therefore cope with major upheavals in their population and thus also social structure in a comparatively short time. This poses new challenges for the design of open spaces in the settlements. Open space as public space within the housing estates is needed – perhaps more than ever – as a low-threshold meeting place in the neighbourhood that is accessible to all. However, the existing open and green spaces are caught between the conflicting and sometimes divergent demands of new and old resident groups. This concerns issues such as noise perception, cleanliness, equality of user groups and the need for safety in public spaces. At the same time, the design of public space in large housing estates does not sufficiently support the urgently needed encounters between people.

In the neighbourhoods, there are few everyday occasions for people to actually meet. At the same time, these occasions are rarely linked to places that allow people to stay and exchange. Tram stops, for example, are often isolated in the streets. Rarely have kiosks or snack bars been established at these transit points, which would functionally complement the actually very lively places. The originally planned district centres only function in a few places, such as Cottbus-Sandow. Here we find a successful example of the interplay of old and new with use-oriented open space planning design and sensible

urban planning orientation. More often, however, the spatial structure of the district centres, and thus also the potential functional mix, was impaired in the course of demolition measures. Large-scale additions of supermarkets or new shopping centres are often not in an urban context, and their orientation towards car parks and easy accessibility by car also makes it difficult to create attractive places. In Halle-Neustadt "Am Treff", for example, a new shopping centre turns the existing pedestrian zone into a closed façade, which means that the opportunity to improve the quality of stay in the existing pedestrian area was not taken. The revitalisation and upgrading of these centres can therefore be an important building block, on the one hand to make the supply offer more diverse, small-scale and thus also more attractive again and, on the other hand, to create everyday meeting places on a human scale at least in some places in the neighbourhoods.

In addition to functioning centres, there is also a lack of usable open spaces. Despite the generally large amount of open space, there is a lack of open spaces and green areas in terms of design and function that invite residents to use and appropriate them: For example, there is a lack of seating areas near the buildings, places to stay on the forecourts of supermarkets or service buildings, or picnic areas in the parks that can be used by everyone. It is true that there are specific offers for children or people interested in sports, and many associations and initiatives also use individual spaces as part of their target group-specific support, education or leisure offers in the neighbourhood (e.g. playground, community garden). However, this management of individual open spaces is dependent on caretakers and funding. This makes a long-term perspective difficult. Specific target group-oriented offers exclude other users and uses at the same time. These offers, which are of course valuable in themselves, cannot fully compensate for the lack of

suitable everyday meeting places and occasions, such as a visit to the fruit and vegetable stall, the ice cream van or the neighbourhood meeting place in the courtyard or in front of the house.

There are various limits to the individual or communal appropriation of green spaces. On the balconies, sometimes also at the entrances of the buildings or in the existing tenant gardens in the neighbourhoods, one can see the desire of many residents to appropriate spaces by adapting them to their own ideas in terms of function and design. This is hardly possible on a larger scale. Even the green spaces close to the flats are very large, poorly structured and it is not easy to see who actually owns the spaces and who would be the contact person for active use and possible design. There are some community gardens, but they are often initiated and managed by the city administration or institutions active in the areas. In principle, such gardens have the potential to bring people together and at the same time to improve the living environment and the everyday life of the residents of the neighbourhoods. Many people know gardening from their childhood, their countries of origin or they are simply enthusiastic about doing it themselves or want access to fresh, locally produced, per-

haps also special or inexpensive food. Working together in the garden is seen in a correspondingly positive light. While such gardens are almost part of the urban development repertoire in other types of neighbourhoods, there have hardly been any successful bottom-up initiatives from the residents of large housing estates, even though the desire for them is expressed more frequently. In addition to the less conducive spatial conditions, there is certainly also a lack of networking opportunities and institutional obstacles to approaching landowners or the city administration, for example. Here, concrete actions for activation and self-empowerment could provide support.   ∎

Social Mix: A Meaningful Orientation for Action?

The findings are clear: In many large housing estates, low-income households are moving in. Because they cannot find adequate housing elsewhere, they move to where it is still available at affordable prices. All in all, this increases the concentration of poverty in the large housing estates. What does this mean for policy? The public debate in Germany is still dominated by the image of a "social mix", which is to be maintained or restored through targeted control of the resident structure of large housing estates. But the scientific evidence for this is thin. Another variable is more important and easier to influence politically: infrastructure provision.

If you follow the discussion on large housing estates in the German public, one narrative dominates above all: "The social mix is in danger!" In conjunction with often dystopian associations, politicians and planners fear the development of "ghettos", warn of "parallel societies" and see the "integration capacity" of our cities threatened. Such fears are based on the idea of "neighbourhood effects", which is also discussed in research. Put simply, this theory assumes that living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood leads to additional difficulties for disadvantaged households. From this diagnosis, housing companies and policy-makers derive the demand to keep occupancy rates for low-income households low in large housing stocks and rather not build too many social housing units in large housing estates. But how exactly are the postulated "neighbourhood effects" justified, and how tenable are the justifications? Can they really justify certain political-planning interventions?

Some researchers refer to neighbourhood effects primarily as stigmatisation processes, i.e. the effects of a "bad address" on the life chances of disadvantaged persons. This connection has been proven by individual qualitative studies, for example on discrimination

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in job applications or in the granting of loans. Overall, however, stigmatisation is difficult to prove. Stigmatisation and discrimination are also difficult for policy-makers to control, because they arise in complex social discourses that are difficult for policy-makers to influence and are reflected in a variety of micro-practices (e.g. in the selection between different housing applicants).

Another perspective refers to socialisation effects. Here it is assumed that the fact that adolescents in the respective neighbourhoods have almost exclusive contact with people of low status shapes their socialisation to such an extent that social advancement is made impossible. If you are surrounded only by the unemployed, you will never think of becoming a professor, so the theory goes. Of all the perspectives, this one implies most clearly that a high proportion of poor households per se (as the governing mayor of Berlin Franziska Giffey put it, for example) leads to "too many social problems in one place". However, this connection is controversial and the scientific evidence for the "contact hypothesis" is thin. How someone grows up is simply dependent on too many factors. Recent research on migration-dominated neighbourhoods has also shown that spatial concentrations of households

with the same social characteristics can also lead to more mutual support and thus better integration. However, even if one shares the very questionable premise that poor people learn poverty from poor people, the question arises as to whether this problem can be tackled through immigration barriers and fewer social housing units in large housing estates. In view of highly strained urban housing markets and the progressive displacement of poorer and even middle-income households from innercity neighbourhoods, moving into large housing estates is currently simply without alternative – at least as long as significantly more social housing is not built in affluent areas as well.

A third reading focuses on infrastructure and argues that neighbourhoods with many poor residents generally have poorer transport links, a less diversified commercial infrastructure and often poorer schools and cultural and social facilities. In this perspective, those who are less well educated, have a poorer diet and have to overcome barriers in order to enjoy culture, for example, are at an additional disadvantage compared to city dwellers who have all this in close proximity. This perspective focuses on material disadvantages, e.g. lack of public transport connections and overburdened schools. Instead of locating the problem with the people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, it emphasises the socio-spatial allocation of resources. It thus directly opens up a perspective for action: neighbourhoods in which households with social problems are concentrated need additional support. They must be particularly well served by public transport and broadband connections, provided with particularly well-equipped schools and

strengthened with particularly active youth, leisure and cultural promotion.

In sum, it becomes clear that the paradigm of social mix does not offer the best approach to the actual problems in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods. A policy that focuses on urban disadvantage compensation in the infrastructure sector would be more targeted and effective here. ∎

"The Large Housing Estate Does Not Exist. There Are Different Large Settlements!"

Schwerin–Mueßer Holz is one of three large housing estates in eastern Germany that were examined in the StadtumMig project. Urban planner Reinhard Huß has accompanied the development of the neighbourhood since the early 1990s. In this interview, he looks back and comments on the discussion about large housing estates as arrival neighbourhoods.

You came to Schwerin in 1993. What was your first impression of the large housing estates there compared to those you knew from West Germany?

I never actually made the comparison between the Federal Republic and Schwerin. It was a very exciting time because many things were possible relatively unbureaucratically. And I had never experienced anything comparable on this scale. I had previously been more concerned with workers' housing estates in the Ruhr area, which were built by the mines for their workers, and only marginally with large housing estates. So Schwerin-Mueßer Holz was something completely new for me.

Was there anything that totally surprised you when you came to Mueßer Holz?

Yes, the surprising thing about Mueßer Holz was how quickly people moved away. The population development was declining very strongly. We drew up a framework plan, but in the course of it the forecasts that were made in connection with it were actually already outdated. At that time we had Stadt-Büro Hunger as our framework planner, who saw the prefabricated housing estates as very viable for the future and

Reinhard Huß

Reinhard Huß is a spatial planner. From 1993 to 2022, he was responsible for the development of large housing estates at the Schwerin Urban Development and Economy Department, especially for the districts of Großer Dreesch, Neu Zippendorf and Mueßer Holz. As part of the StadtumMig project, the state capital Schwerin was involved as a joint partner and Reinhard Huß was the central contact person in the city administration.

was committed to preserving and valorising these estates. But the expectations he formulated were far removed from reality. The development was much more negative than predicted.

What factors contributed to this negative development in the neighbourhoods at the time?

The essential thing was that this housing construction is and was very strongly associated with the system of the GDR. It followed the claim "Everyone gets equal living conditions, the professor lives next to the worker. No one should be better off". This was supposed to solve the GDR's housing problem. You also got a flat if you were a member of the party. There were many connections to the political system of the GDR. That certainly made it unattractive for many people to live there after reunification. Of course, there was also the urge to live more individually and to escape this same housing construction – into one's own home, into the city centre, into the redeveloped housing stock. Then the residential environment became increasingly unattractive because of the masses of cars flooding in. Infrastructure was quickly closed down, restaurants and the like. It was an exodus, driven by a variety of factors.

The Mueßer Holz neighbourhood

Residential building Keplerstraße 6-8, Schwerin-Mueßer Holz

The Schwerin neighbourhoods of Mueßer Holz and Neu Zippendorf

The Schwerin districts of Mueßer Holz and Neu Zippendorf are being studied together in one of three case studies in the StadtumMig project. They are located about five kilometres from the city centre on the south-eastern outskirts of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's state capital Schwerin. They were built between 1976 and 1989 as the second and third construction phases of the former largest residential area in Schwerin, Großer Dreesch, in industrial pre-fabricated construction technique. Five-storey residential buildings (WBS 70 and P2 types) and individual eleven-storey high-rise groups dominate. After 1990, migration and a decline in birth rates led to a massive loss of residents. At the end of the 2010s, about 10,000 people lived in Mueßer Holz and over 5,000 in Neu Zippendorf. In terms of the composition of the population, the districts are characterised by a high proportion of households with transfer payments and a high unemployment rate. High vacancy rates and low rents have led to Neu Zippendorf and especially Mueßer Holz becoming destinations for immigration in recent years.

Ortsteile der Landeshauptstadt Schwerin

erstellt für die freie Enzyklopädie Wikipedia
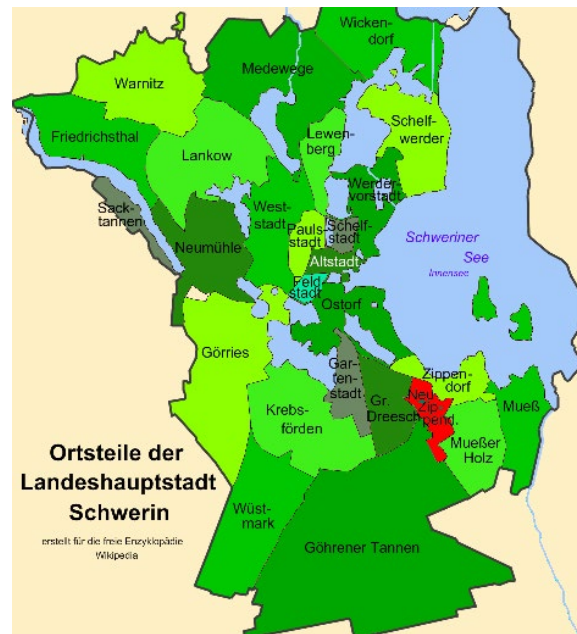
Could or should the municipality have acted differently in terms of urban policy at that time in order to maintain the attractiveness of the large housing estate? How do you see it in retrospect?

I don't think there would have been many other options. In my view, the biggest mistake that was made was the privatisation, especially in Mueßer Holz, which was not really discussed at all. There was a compulsion to privatise 15 % of the housing stock because of the old debt regulation. We talked to the housing companies about many things in the context of urban redevelopment, but not about where privatisation should have taken place. This severely limited the ability of the municipality and the housing companies to act, precisely in this neighbourhood, Mueßer Holz, where it would have been most urgently needed. The consequence for the district was that the deconstruction was very diffuse.

What changes do you think the immigration has brought about?

Well, the first immigration was the immigration of Russian Germans in the 1990s. At that time they were always seen as problematic. But I think that this group had a rather stabilising effect because they often had a good education, and also demands in terms of their housing situation and the development of their children and so on. Cultural life also came into the neighbourhoods. They quickly created a relatively large number of associations where they were culturally engaged. Mueßer Holz had already reached the low point of population development in 2011, but since then the population has increased. The influx of refugees from 2015 onwards increased the population growth considerably. In terms of urban planning, this did not result in such major changes. What was noticeable was that people wanted to be self-employed and tried to open small shops or snack bars. Then the residential environment was used more intensively. There was and

is a bit more life outside, the parks and open spaces are used more. But beyond that, it hasn't had a big impact on the neighbourhood, no. Maybe there were a few more conflicts, now also with the Germans.

What were the biggest challenges for planning due to immigration? And what were the positive aspects?

The large housing estates came into focus because they were the place where these people could be accommodated. When they came in 2015, there was a lot of empty housing. The biggest impact was that housing that was supposed to be demolished was not demolished because it was needed for housing. This was perhaps an opportunity for the owners to make money from these flats again. For the urban planners it meant that plans to rebuild, to upgrade the district had to be postponed. That was certainly the most serious effect on urban planning at the time, that there was a postponement of five to seven years. Apart from that, it

also meant a diversification of the population structure for the districts. The challenges were the associated tasks of integration, language acquisition, and integration into the labour market. And since these people now lived in these large housing estates, it was also concentrated there. This is also a thesis of the StadtumMig project, that large housing estates are becoming arrival neighbourhoods – and of course this is noticeable.

Is this reflected in the policies and strategies of the municipality?

I think it's very ambivalent. When I started here, the goal was to upgrade these neighbourhoods and establish them as residential areas in the city. Then – I would say shortly after the turn of the millennium – that was no longer the case. Politicians often assumed that we didn't need them any more. The population figures for Mueßer Holz were around 6,000, and there was hardly any willingness to invest in these districts, especially in Mueßer Holz. This changed at some point, so that the districts are now viewed positively. It was recognised that housing is needed in the long term. Due to the segregation study by Helbig and Jähnen (see p. 6), integration into the city and desegregation have again become the goal of urban policy. This segregation study has changed a lot – in terms of the perception of these neighbourhoods. But especially for Mueßer Holz it is completely unclear how to react. On the one hand, it is said that the segregation must be reduced, but on the other hand, one is a bit helpless because of the dimension of the problem.

How do you think large housing estates will develop in the future? And what political course do you think needs to be set here at city level or perhaps also at federal level?

I have my problems with the term "large housing estate". There is no such thing as "the large housing estate" here in Schwerin and there will never be one anywhere; there are many different large housing estates.

What is needed now to help Mueßer Holz and counteract the greatest fears of social decline?

Investment in education infrastructure is important. At the moment, this is already happening quite well. The fact that the job centre and the employment agency are important institutions for the city and thus also focus a little more on the district is certainly also impor-

View of the Berliner Platz in the Neu Zippendorf neighbourhood, Schwerin

tant. But points of attraction must also be created for the city as a whole. The opening of the television tower and the upgrading of the fire brigade museum would perhaps be a good possibility, because the district must be integrated more strongly into the city as a whole. It is also important that the residential environment is upgraded to eliminate the effects of deconstruction. However, this is a very difficult task due to the limited financial power of the city. In many places you can see the gaps left by the demolition. The district makes a very unfinished impression at one corner or another. New housing construction is also important, as a sign that it is possible to create new housing in this part of town. Until now, this

district has always been seen from the point of view of deconstruction. I don't think that such new housing construction will contribute much to desegregation, because the numbers that are possible will be relatively small. But I think that in any case new housing construction is good for the image, to show: New housing is also possible in the district and not just demolition.

For the city as a whole, it is important that the differentiation that has taken place in recent years is perceived at all. That we no longer talk about "the large housing estate" or "the Plattenbau", but that we take a closer look: How have urban districts and neighbourhoods developed? I think that's one of the main problems, that this differentiation still doesn't take place, but that there is still a great deal of generalisation. This usually leads to the worst image spreading to all, and not vice versa, that the best image pulls the others along. ￭

The interview was conducted by Madlen Pilz and Matthias Bernt. The interview was conducted online on March 3, 2022. It is printed in an abridged and edited form.

The IRS is Repositioning Itself

Politics and Planning

The research area analyses the political negotiation, planning design and transformation of the social and spatial development of cities and regions. It primarily examines the govern-ance of increasingly uncertain, complex and ambiguous problem situations.

Contemporary History and Archive

The research area's focus is on the design, planning and appropriation of spaces in recent history. Currently, the history of urbanisation, the history of architecture and urban plan-ning in the GDR, the significance of material-ity in the historical change of the built environ-ment as well as cross-border cooperation in spatial development are the focus of interest.

Research Programme

On 1 January 2022, the new IRS research programme entitled "Disrup-tion. Critical Moments of So-cio-Spa-tial Change". In the recent past, sur-prisingly occurring crises – such as the COVID 19 pandem-ic – have shown that future expectations should not be based solely on mega-trends with long-term effects. Rather, the occurrence of further, unforeseeable events must be expected. How such disruptions can be captured in social science, how they arise, what influence they have on practices of socio-spatial change and how societies can better prepare for them will be researched at the IRS over the next four years on the basis of this new research programme. ▪

At the turn of the year 2021/2022, changes in the organisation and ori-entation of IRS research took effect. They are the result of a strategy pro-cess "IRS 2025", which the Institute had carried out in the previous two years. As the most important change, since 1 January 2022 the IRS no longer or-gan-ises its social science research from a spatial perspective in five research departments, but in three consolidated research areas:

Economy and Civil Society

The research area examines how spaces are created and changed through interactive, in-novative, cre-ative, knowledge-based and entrepre-neurial action. It focuses on the com-plex interaction of civil society, public and private sector actors.

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